U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-075-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COD-035705

PROJECT NAME: Gathering pipelines for gas and produced water from T87X-3G to Piceance Creek Unit compressor station

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T2S, R97W, sections 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, & 14, and
T2S, R96W, sections 7, & 8;
6th P.M

APPLICANT: ExxonMobil Corp

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: The applicant proposes to install two buried steel pipelines (16" & 4") in separate trenches in the same right-of-way for approximately 9000' with a right-of-way (ROW) of 65', and a single buried steel pipeline (16") for approximately 15,500'with a ROW of 50'. Total length of the proposed pipelines is 24,500 feet. Total disturbance on BLM would be approximately 31.23 acres. The first segment of the pipeline would be from well 87-3 to well 35-11 paralleling the access road to 87-3 and then most of the proposed pipeline route will follow either an existing two track or parallel the existing gathering line from the 35-11 to the Piceance Creek Unit plant. Pig launcher would be placed at the 87-3 and 35-11. Two pig receivers would be located on the 35-11 just upstream of the intersection of the two line segments. A slug catcher would be placed on the 35-11 to handle liquid slugs from normal operations and pigging operations. A pig receiver would also be placed on the 16" line within the designated ROW near the plant inlet. There would be approximately 645' of route deviation in the NWSW of sec.7 due to existing facilities congestion in the existing ROW. Above ground cathodic test stations (3"diameter x 3'high post) would be required at one mile intervals and would be placed in the designated ROW. Three low water drips would be buried with access via a 6" hatch above ground. Water breaks will be constructed as per BLM Operating Standards and revegetation as specified by BLM. The proposed action would commence upon approval by BLM.

No Action Alternative: The proposed action would not be authorized; environmental impacts associated with the proposed action would not occur.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: To respond to request by applicant to exercise lease rights and install gathering lines.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-5 thru 2-6

Decision Language: Make federal oil and gas resources available for leasing and development in a manner that provides reasonable protection for other resource values.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action. During periods of low precipitation, air quality in the area of the proposed action is often diminished by dust caused by human disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. After adequate vegetation is reestablished, blowing dust should return to pre-construction levels.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No increase in dust will occur.

Mitigation: If fugitive dust becomes a problem the operator will be required to spray water or a mulch on the pipeline disturbance until revegetation has occurred.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline route has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Bott 2004, Compliance Dated 11/8/2004, Metcalf 2004, Compliance Dated 9/2/2004) with no new cultural resources located along the proposed pipeline route.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed pipeline route would not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The noxious weeds; black henbane, houndstongue, yellow toadflax, mullein and bull thistle occur throughout the project area in un-revegetated soil disturbance associated with roads, wells and pipelines as a result of oil and gas development. The invasive alien cheatgrass also occurs on these same sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create areas of soil disturbance which, if they are not promptly and effectively revegetated, will provide safe sites for the establishment of noxious weeds and cheatgrass.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: The operator will monitor the right of way for a minimum of five years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species.

The operator will be responsible for eradication of noxious weeds and cheatgrass on the right of way using materials and methods authorized in advance by the Field Manager.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: An array of migratory birds fulfills nesting functions in the project area's; big sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodland communities from late May through early August. Species associated with these shrubland and woodland communities are typical and widely represented in the Resource Area and region. Those bird populations identified as having higher conservation interest (i.e., Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program) include Brewer's sparrow and Virginia's warbler in the shrubland types and gray flycatcher, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, and violet-green swallow in the woodlands. These birds, too, are well distributed at appropriate densities in this Resource Area's extensive like-habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Project construction would be initiated in April 2005 with completion anticipated by late May 2005. As scheduled, this project would be completed prior to most migratory bird nesting activity. In the case of the early nesting pinyon jay, these birds nest in loose traditional colonies that are often extensive. Although not specifically inventoried for pinyon jay, the BLM biologist conducting raptor surveys during April 2005 failed to note any small corvid-like nests and it is unlikely that this area is used by nesting jays. Further, pinyon jays are aggressive re-nesters and a disrupted nest attempt is less likely to have strong ramifications on an individual's or population's breeding success.

Even with unanticipated project delays, because nearly all the pipeline alignment parallels existing pipelines and roads (i.e., lower woodland nest density in close proximity to ongoing disturbances and low nest densities along existing herbaceous-dominated rights-of-ways with

virtually no species of high conservation interest) this project would have a relatively low level of impact on the nesting activities of migratory birds.

The redistribution of cleared woody material across the right-of-way may aid in accelerating the redevelopment of shrubs as foraging and nesting substrate for migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to disrupt migratory bird nest activity.

Mitigation: Woody material cleared from the right-of-way should be redistributed across the right-of-way after conventional recontouring and seeding practices have been completed.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened or endangered animals that are known to inhabit or derive important benefit from the project vicinity.

The pipeline intersects about 9000 feet of pinyon-juniper woodland that presumably possesses sufficiently well developed woodland structure to offer potential as nest or roost habitat for northern goshawk and 3 bats (i.e., fringed and Yuma myotis, Thompson's big-eared) that are included on BLM's sensitive species list. These woodlands are heavily dissected by well-field access roads, pipelines, and powerlines and do not offer conditions thought amenable to goshawk nesting. Woodland nest surveys conducted in mid-April by a BLM biologist revealed no indications of past or recent accipiter nesting activity within a minimum 500 feet of the proposed corridor. The roosts and hiberacula of these bat species are almost solely associated with caves, buildings, and underground mines; woodland roost sites are expected to offer only limited day roost opportunity during the spring through fall months. There is some evidence to suggest that bat roost trees may be more often situated within the interior of stands rather than on the stand margins.

The Magnolia area hosts a small, remnant population of greater sage grouse that are the target of population and habitat restoration efforts by the BLM and Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW). The proposed pipeline alignment is situated on the southwest corner of habitat presently occupied by grouse. Although the two ridgelines extending to the south and west of the Exxon compressor station offer about 240 acres of potential habitat, vegetation succession and heavy development pressures have generally relegated grouse to the north and east of the Magnolia Camp over the past 15 years.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on animals listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Approximately 11 acres of mixed woodlands would be cleared, virtually all of which involves widening existing pipeline or road corridors by 50 feet. Although the potential for goshawk nest activity in close proximity to this pipeline alignment is remote, BLM inventoried affected

woodland stands for functional nest sites. No evidence of woodland raptor nest activity was found.

Considering the nearly 250,000 acres of pinyon-juniper woodland in Piceance Basin, the narrow widening of pre-existing corridors is unlikely to have any substantive influence on the availability of bat roost substrate or the suitability of stands for bat roosting activity. Alternative pipeline alignments in this area would likely increase the extent of mature woodland clearing as well as bisect the interiors of contiguous woodland stands.

The temporary loss of about 4 acres of suboptimal and peripherally occupied sage-steppe habitats immediately adjacent to a well field access road would have little effective influence on Magnolia's sage-grouse populations in the short term. Effective long term reclamation with native seed mixtures that enhance understory characteristics favoring grouse brood and nest habitat character would, however, complement efforts by BLM and CDOW in enhancing sage-steppe habitats and reestablishing a viable grouse population on Magnolia.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have any further influence on woodland habitats that may serve as nest or roost habitat for BLM sensitive species.

Mitigation: Reclamation on the right-of-way from the center of section 7 east (i.e., about 4000 feet, ending at the compressor station) should use seed mixes and seeding methods that include and promote successful establishment of full complement of grasses and favored native forbs at the following rates per acre in the seed mixture in addition to native seed mix #3 as listed below: arrowleaf balsamroot - 1 #PLS, Utah sweetvetch - 1 #PLS, Lewis flax-0 .5 #PLS, Rocky Mountain penstemon- 0.25 #PLS). Cleared woody material should be evenly scattered along the row after customary recontouring and seeding are finalized.

As a means of determining the ultimate success of these forbs in the reclamation seed mix, it is recommended that the proponent be responsible for establishing and maintaining in serviceable condition a permanent exclosure on this sage-steppe habitat. This exclosure would be designed to exclude cattle and wild horses, with dimensions of 100 feet paralleling the ROW and a width that spans the full authorized temporary construction ROW width. The location of this structure would be subject to the approval of BLM's WRFO Manager, but would generally be situated on habitat best representing that locally selected by sage-grouse within sections 7 (E1/2) or 8 (SW1/4NW1/4) T2S, R96W.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: Although it is likely that this project locale has a relatively low potential to support special status animals, the area currently meets the standards for mature woodland associates. Woodland clearing attributable to pipeline installation has been planned to parallel existing forms of disturbance as much as possible, thereby minimizing functional losses in habitat utility and extent. Surveys would ensure that current year reproductive efforts of woodland raptors would progress unimpeded. With the application of resource provisions (e.g., reclamation) the proposed action would have negligible cumulative influence on the functional capacity of

habitats to support sage-grouse, goshawk, and roosting bats and would therefore allow for continued meeting of this land health standard.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: The project area mostly consists of a pinyon-juniper shrubland vegetation community. There is some outcropping of the Green River Shale Formation occurring within the overlaying Uintah Formation. Two Federal listed threatened plant species (Dudley Bluffs bladderpod and the Piceance twinpod) and two Federal listed candidate plant species (Graham beardtongue and the White River penstemon) have the potential to occur on the barren shale outcrops.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There are no anticipated impacts to any Special Status plant species. A pedestrian survey was conducted by PBS&J on May 16-23, 2002. No Special Status plant species were found to occur within the proposed project areas.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: There is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action or no action alternative would have an influence on the condition or function of Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant species. Thus there would be no effect on achieving the land health standard.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed action has been identified in segments 15 and 16 of the Stream Classifications and Water quality standards by the State; refer to the table below for the definitions of these two segments.

Stream Classifications and Water quality Standards			
Map Code	**Drainage name**	**Stream Segment**	**Stream Classification**
W.PC	Piceance Creek	Segment 15; Mainstem of Piceance Creek from the Emily Oldland diversion dam to the confluence with the White River.	Aquatic Life Cold 2, Recreation 1b, Agriculture
W.PC.HG	Hatch Gulch	Segment 16; all tributaries to Piceance Creek, including all wetlands, lakes and reservoirs from the source to the confluence with the White River except for specific listings in segments 17-20	Aquatic Life Warm 2, Recreation 2, Agriculture
W.PC.ND	Dudley Gulch North		
W.PC.DG	Dudley Gulch		
W.PC.MG	McKee Gulch		

A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. All actions are within the White River watershed. The State has classified these segments as "Use Protected" reaches. Their designated beneficial uses are: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegredation review requirements in the Antidegredation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 2000/100 ml, and 630/100 ml E. coli.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: One impact that could result from the proposed action would be an increase in sediment transport. Annual runoff from this watershed is dynamic and dependent on some aspects we control, such as the amount of vegetation retained for watershed protection and vegetation density. Depleting the vegetation cover needed to protect watersheds from raindrop impact and runoff could cause short-term erosion problems and increased sedimentation to Piceance Creek and on down to the White River until successful best management practices (BMPs) have been implemented and proven successful. The magnitude of these impacts is dependent on the amount of surface disturbance, climatic conditions during the time the soils are exposed to the elements and the success of the mitigation proposed in the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impacts from the no-action alternative are anticipated.

Mitigation: All disturbed areas including the cut and fill slopes will be promptly recontoured and revegetated using the recommended seed mix in the Vegetation section below.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The water quality of Piceance Creek is well within the criteria set by the state, thus meeting the land health standard. The proposed action will not change this status.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, riparian or wetland systems, prime and unique farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. Furthermore, there is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action or no action alternative would have an influence on whether riparian or wetland habitats would meet the Public Land Health Standard. Because the proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable probability of influencing intermittent or perennial systems that are capable of supporting riparian or wetland communities, application of the land health standard is not applicable. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: Soils affected by the proposed action have been analyzed in an Order III soil survey done by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The table below identifies these soils and has corresponding characteristics of each mapping unit.

Soil #	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
15	Castner channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Medium to rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
33	Forelle loam	3-8%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate	>60
43	Irigul-Parachute complex	12-45%5-30%	Loamy Slopes /Mountain Loam	<2	Rapid	Slight to high	10-20
64	Piceance fine sandy loam	5-15%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to high	20-40
70	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	<2	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
73	Rentsac channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
80	Shawa loam	3-8%	Deep Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to slight	>60

91	Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop complex	15-90%	Stoney Foothills		Rapid	Very high	10-20
96	Veatch channery loam	12-50%	Loamy Slopes	<2	Medium	Moderate to very high	20-40
104	Yamac Loam	2-15%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Slight to moderate	>60

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts associated with oil and gas and road development include but are not limited to, loss of topsoil, soil compaction and possible increase in sediment loads to the White River. The primary surface-disturbing impact would be a potential increase in sediment transport from runoff events after the protective vegetative cover has been removed. BMPs used to slow runoff, trap sediment and prepare reclaimed areas for seeding would help reduce soil loss. With the use of these BMPs, impacts are expected to be short in duration, during the construction phase and for a short time after construction until successful reclamation are achieved.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from not permitting the proposed action.

Mitigation: Additional mitigation above what is already proposed is not necessary.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Soils at the proposed location do not meet the criteria established in the Public Land Health Standard. The proposed action would not change this status.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Vegetation in the project area is dominated by Pinyon-juniper woodlands interspersed with mountain big sagebrush parks. The understory of the woodlands varies from very sparse decadent Utah serviceberry and mountain mahogany in the older woodlands to one with a moderately dense cover of native grasses and forbs. The predominate ecological site associated with big sagebrush parks is Rolling Loam.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The principal impact to vegetation will be complete removal of vegetation on the pipeline right of ways and the earthen disturbance associated with it. In terms of plant community composition, structure and function, the principal negative impact over the long term would occur if invasive species or noxious weeds are allowed to establish and proliferate on the disturbed areas resulting from the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: In addition to the mitigation in the Invasive and Non-invasive Species section: Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix # 3 identified in the table below.

SPECIES (VARIETY)	LBS. PLS/ACRE
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar)	2
Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana)	2
Indian ricegrass (Nezpar)	1
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1
Utah sweetvetch	1

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* Plant communities in the project area currently meet the Standard and are expected to continue to meet the Standard following implementation of the proposed action.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There are no BLM-administered aquatic communities that would have any reasonable probability of being directly or indirectly influenced by the project implementation. The nearest consolidated federal holding of riparian vegetation is over 15 miles downstream in Piceance Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no reasonable probability of influencing distant aquatic habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative would involve no authorized use that would have potential to influence distant aquatic habitats.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Because the proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable probability of influencing aquatic habitats, application of the land health standards is not applicable.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The bulk of this project is encompassed by big game winter ranges (including critical severe winter ranges) that are occupied primarily from September through May. Deer distribution is generally confined to lower elevations through February, but beginning in March and extending through early May, deer reoccupy the valleys along the southern margin of the Piceance Triangle, including the project area. Road density in the project area exceeds the objective levels for big game winter and critical severe winter ranges established in the White River RMP (i.e., 3.0/1.5 miles per square mile). The proposed action does not require additional access for drips, but cleared pipeline right-of-ways often tend to

support subsequent recreational vehicle use and results in unintended expansions of road and trail networks.

The proposed alignment involves a wide range of vegetation communities that are occupied permanently or seasonally by a host of nongame mammals and birds. These species are common and widely distributed in extensive habitats throughout Piceance Basin and there is no evidence suggesting there are narrowly endemic or highly specialized species occurring in the project vicinity.

Raptor nest substrate associated with the project is composed of pinyon-juniper woodlands; the project would involve no cliff nest sites of golden eagle or red-tailed hawk. Woodland habitat best suited for raptor nest use (i.e., mature stands) is confined to about 9000 feet of alignment between PL and McKee Gulches. Throughout its length, the proposed right-of-way parallels existing forms of disturbance (i.e., pipelines, roads). Based on BLM's experience, woodland nesting raptors tend to avoid selecting nest sites in close proximity to breaks in canopy and, heavily bisected by well access roads, pipelines, and powerline right-of-ways, the utility of these stands for raptor nesting is believed to be substantially reduced. A BLM biologist inventoried these stands in mid-April and found no evidence of recent or past nest activity.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The prevailing 2004/2005 winter weather conditions have been marked by the long and early development of unseasonably mild temperatures (since February), including early emergence of herbaceous forage and diminished snowpack. Although deer use will be prevalent in the drainages draining south into the Piceance Creek valley during project timeframes, deer appear to be in remarkably good condition for this time of year and minor elevation of energy demands attributable to avoidance of this localized pipeline project (relative to severe winter range) would have no effective influence on big game nutrition or energy balance. These conditions meet the exception criteria for the WRFO severe winter range timing limitation stipulation and it is recommended that no timing limitation be applied to this action.

Big game impacts associated with road density and use (i.e., behavioral avoidance and habitat disuse; increased energetic demands) received prominent address in the White River ROD/RMP. The proposed project entails no further development of access (e.g., drips) and the existing corridors used by this project either presently support 2-track trails or not predisposed to the development of such access. This project is not expected to increase the density or distribution of vehicular access and would not add cumulatively to the current road and trail network.

Longer-term reductions in the local availability of woodland cover and woody forage (approximately 31 acres) are minor and discountable relative to surrounding resource base. Woodland clearing along existing roads and pipeline corridors would involve relatively narrow margins of woodland stands. Expanding the width of these previously cleared corridors by 50 feet would have no substantive affect on landscape composition or character for nongame bird or mammal use. Reclamation practices, including the recommended use of native seed and redistribution of large woody debris on the right-of-way, would retain the short term utility of cleared right-of-way for small mammal use and abbreviate the time required to reestablish native shrub growth. Woody debris would aid in diversifying ungulate grazing use intensity and

moisture regimes along the corridor and provide effective cover patches where rodent seed caching behavior, an important mechanism for deciduous browse germination, could take place.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to adversely modify sage-grouse or non-game habitat or disrupt raptor nesting activity or big game distribution.

Mitigation: After standard reclamation practices are applied to surface disturbance, large, woody material cleared from the Right-of-Way (ROW) should be redistributed on the ROW to aid in accelerating the redevelopment of foraging and nesting substrate for game and nongame species.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The landscapes associated with the proposed action currently meet the land health standards for terrestrial wildlife communities. Project implementation would, with effective reclamation, have no lasting consequence on the utility or suitability of habitat as a source of forage or cover for local big game, sage-grouse, and nongame animal populations. Right-of-way clearing associated with the proposed action would remove a modest amount of woodland cover (about 11 acres) and sage-steppe habitat (4 acres) in the longer term, though the bulk of this clearing would occur adjacent to existing pipeline corridors and roads—localized situations where habitat utility for wildlife is presently compromised. Subsequent reclamation of these disturbed areas with native species would be consistent with proper successional processes and continued meeting of the land health standards for terrestrial game and nongame wildlife populations.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management		X	
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations	X		
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Wild Horses	X		

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: BLM roads1174, 1175 and 1265 will likely be affected by this action where the pipeline coincides with the road. In addition approximately 1.82 miles of proposed pipeline route persist with an area identified as "limited to existing" routes and the remainder (approximately 2.77 miles) persists in an open area for travel management.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: An increase in vehicular traffic could be expected on the affected BLM roads. Road surface damage and temporary traffic congestion due to pipeline construction may occur. No new public access will be created.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: Signs indicating that the pipeline right-of-way is closed to motorized traffic for restoration shall be placed within T2S, R97W, in sections 11 and 14 where pipeline right-of-way crosses roads, since the area is identified as 'limited to existing travel routes'.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline is located in an area mapped as the Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition I formation meaning it is know to produce scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation to bury the pipeline there is the potential to impact scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. If it becomes necessary, at any time, to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation to bury the pipeline then a paleontological monitor shall be present for such excavations.

2. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed action is within the Little Hills allotment (06006). The allotment is used from spring through fall by Burke Brothers as part of their yearly livestock operation on the public lands.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If operations occur from May through November, truck/construction traffic on access roads and pipeline construction areas will create a large amount of airborne dust which will be deposited on vegetation adjacent to roads/pipeline construction areas. These deposits will impair plant function and also limit/prevent use of the vegetation by native and domestic herbivores.
Following successful revegetation, there will be no net loss of forage for livestock.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the existing situation.

Mitigation: If construction/development occurs between April 15 and November 15, the operator will be required to water or surface access roads/ pipeline construction areas to reduce airborne dust and damage to roadside vegetation communities**.**

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

The project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). SPM physical and social recreation setting is typically characterized by a natural appearing environment with few administrative controls, low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

The project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Roaded Natural (RN). RN physical and social recreation setting may have modifications which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alterations would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. There is strong evidence of designed roads and/or highways. Structures are generally scattered, remaining visually subordinate or unnoticed to the sensitive travel route observer. Structures may include utility corridors, microwave installations and so on. Frequency of contact is moderate to high on roads and low to moderate on trails and away from roads. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a moderate probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

With the introduction of new well pads and roads, an increase of traffic could be expected increasing the likihood of human interactions, the sights and sounds associated with the human environment and a less naturally appearing environment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to recreationists.

Mitigation: None.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action (buried pipelines) would be located parallel to existing pipeline ROW and existing roadways. After the pipeline is buried, there would be no visible indication of the presence of the action, except for the above ground required markers indicating the route of the pipeline, and cathodic test stations. These markers and cathodic test stations would not dominate the view of the casual observer traveling along the access road. The standards of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no additional environmental consequences.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts from oil and gas development were analyzed in the White River Resource Area Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS) completed in June 1996. Current development, including the proposed action, has not exceeded the foreseeable development analyzed in the PRMP/FEIS.

REFERENCES CITED:

Bott, Tracy
2004 Exxon-Mobil Corporation: Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed Love Range 16" gas/Water Pipeline and Holding Pond in Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Metcalf, Michael D.
2004 A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed Exxon-Mobil PCU T87X-G3 Well Pad and Flowline, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden
1979 Geologic Map Of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Caroline Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Soils
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Bob Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-075-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the construction, operation, and maintenance of the gathering pipelines for gas and produced water from T87X-3G to Piceance Creek Unit compressor station as described in the proposed action, with the mitigation measures listed below. This development, with mitigation, is consistent with the decisions in the White River ROD/RMP, and environmental impacts will be minimal.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. If fugitive dust becomes a problem the operator will be required to spray water or a mulch on the pipeline disturbance until revegetation has occurred.

2. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.
-

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

4. The operator will monitor the right of way for a minimum of five years post construction to detect the presence of noxious and invasive species.

5. The operator will be responsible for eradication of noxious weeds and cheatgrass on the right of way using materials and methods authorized in advance by the Field Manager.

6. Woody material cleared from the right-of-way should be redistributed across the right-of-way after conventional recontouring and seeding practices have been completed.

7. Reclamation on the right-of-way from the center of section 7 east (i.e., about 4000 feet, ending at the compressor station) should use seed mixes and seeding methods that include and promote successful establishment of full complement of grasses and favored native forbs at the following rates per acre in the seed mixture in addition to native seed mix #3 as listed below: arrowleaf balsamroot - 1 #PLS, Utah sweetvetch - 1 #PLS, Lewis flax-0 .5 #PLS, Rocky Mountain penstemon- 0.25 #PLS). Cleared woody material should be evenly scattered along the ROW after customary recontouring and seeding are finalized.

8. As a means of determining the ultimate success of these forbs in the reclamation seed mix, it is recommended that the proponent be responsible for establishing and maintaining in serviceable condition a permanent exclosure on this sage-steppe habitat. This exclosure would be designed to exclude cattle and wild horses, with dimensions of 100 feet paralleling the ROW and a width that spans the full authorized temporary construction ROW width. The location of this structure would be subject to the approval of BLM's WRFO Manager, but would generally be situated on habitat best representing that locally selected by sage-grouse within sections 7 (E1/2) or 8 (SW1/4NW1/4) T2S, R96W.

9. The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

10. All disturbed areas including the cut and fill slopes will be promptly recontoured and revegetated using the recommended seed mix in the Vegetation section below.

11. In addition to the mitigation in the Invasive and Non-invasive Species section: Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix # 3 identified in the table below.

SPECIES (VARIETY)	LBS. PLS/ACRE
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar)	2

Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana)	2
Indian ricegrass (Nezpar)	1
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1
Utah sweetvetch	1

12. After standard reclamation practices are applied to surface disturbance, large, woody material cleared from the Right-of-Way (ROW) should be redistributed on the ROW to aid in accelerating the redevelopment of foraging and nesting substrate for game and nongame species.

13. Signs indicating that the pipeline right-of-way is closed to motorized traffic for restoration shall be placed within T2S, R97W, in sections 11 and 14 where pipeline right-of-way crosses roads, since the area is identified as 'limited to existing travel routes'.

14. If it becomes necessary, at any time, to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation to bury the pipeline then a paleontological monitor shall be present for such excavations.

15. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

16. If construction/development occurs between April 15 and November 15, the operator will be required to water or surface access roads/ pipeline construction areas to reduce airborne dust and damage to roadside vegetation communities.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING:

NAME OF PREPARER: Keith Whitaker

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Kent E. Walter
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 04/26/05

ATTACHMENTS: Location map of the proposed action.

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Location of Proposed Action
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